Message Text

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CORRECTED COPY (TEXT)

EO 11652: GDS TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJECT: DOMESTIC CONSTRAINTS MINIMAL AS BEGIN PREPARES FOR CAMP DAVID

SUMMARY: BEGIN IS RELATIVELY FREE FROM IMMEDIATE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS AS HE BEGINS PREPARATION FOR CAMP DAVID. IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, HIS PERFORMANCE AT THE SUMMIT WILL BE DETERMINED BY AN HISTORICAL-IDEOLOGICAL VISION WHICH RETAINS CONFIDENTIAL

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SUFFICIENT POSER TO RALLY PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ANY POLICY DECISIONS HE MAY TAKE. BEGIN IS A SHREWD POLITICIAN, HOWEVER, AND HE WILL BE OBSERVING THE MAIN INTERNAL PARTICIPANTS IN THE PRE-SUMMIT DEBATE HERE. THE ISRELI LEFT DOES NOT FIGURE IN BEGIN'S POLITICAL CALCULATIONS AND WILL NOT. BEGIN TAKES THE LABOR PARTY SERIOUSLY BUT DOES NOT FEEL THREATENED BY LABOR'S REPEATED PRONOUNCEMENTS ON THE CONCEPTUAL SUPERIORITY OF TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE. IF IN THE

NEST THREE WEEKS LABOR IS CAPABLE ONOY OF HONING MORE FINELY THAT FAMILIAR ARGUMENT, BEGIN WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO DISCOUNT THE ABILITY OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION TO CHALLENGE HIM. WITHIN THE COALISITON THE DMC'S THREAT TO WITHDRAW HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY EASED BY YADIN'S EXPECTED PARTICIPATION AT CAMP DAVID. YADIN WILL BE UNDER PRESSURE FROM HIS PARTY TO DELIVER AT CAMP DAVID, BEGIN LESS SO. THE LIBERALS REMAIN DOCILE, AND THE NRP'S LOYALTY IS ASSURED IN THE SHORT RUN. WEIZMAN CONTINUES TO BE THE MAIN THREAT TO BEGIN. WHILE A DAYAN-WEIZMAN LINK-UP IS UNLIKELY, IT WOULD CONSTITUTE THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO BEGIN'S AUTHORITY. HOWEVER. FAR MORE LIKELY THAN A DAYAN-WEIZMAN ENTENTE IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT DAYAN AND WEIZMAN WILL WORK SEPARATELY AT CAMP DAVID TO MOVE BEGIN TO GREATER MODERATION. THE LIMITED INFLUENCE ON BEGIN OF THE RIGHT - PARTS OF HERUT. SHARON, AS WELL AS LA'A AND THE GUSH - IS BASED ON EMOTION AND PARSONAL LOYALTY RATHER THAN POLITICAL CON-SIDERATIONS. BEGIN, IN SHORT, IS UNDER MINIMUM INTERNAL POLITICAL PRESSURE AS THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT DRAWS NEAR. END SUMMARY

1. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT HERE THAT THE PERSON OF PRIME MINISTER BEGIN REMAINS THE KEY TO PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT AT CAMP DAVID. BEGIN IS FIRMLY IN THE SADDLE AND HAS REGAINED THE AUTHORITY TO DEFINE THE BOUNDS OF THE ACCEPTABLE IN NEGOTIATING ISRAEL'S FUTURE. HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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CLAIM THAT HE IS SUPPORTED BY A NATIONAL CONSENSUS IS IN LARGE MEASURE VALID; IT IS A CONSENSUS OF TRUST IN BEGIN PERSONALLY AND IN THE NO-NONSENSE HARD-LINE APPROACH HE REPRESENTS. THIS MEANS THAT BEGIN HAS - AND WHAT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT, BELIEVES THAT HE HAS - A LARGE MEASURE OF FREEDOM FROM DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS AS HE PREPARES FOR THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT. ALL OF WHICH IS ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING, AS WE HAVE NOTED OFTEN IN THE PAST, THAT BY FAR THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CONSTRAINTES ARE THE ONES WHICH BEGIN WILL CARRY IN HIS HEAD. THE LIMITS TO ISRAEL'S FLEXIBILITY AT CAMP DAVID WILL BE TO AN IMPORTANT DEGREE A FUNCTION OF PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S WILLINGNESS AND CAPACITY TO OVERCOME HIS OWN IDEOLOGICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL RIGIDITIES.

2. THIS SAID, BEGIN REMAINS, AS A JERUSALEM POST EDITORIAL PUT IT THIS WEEK, "A SHREWD POLITICAL PRO WHEN IT COMES TO COUNTING HEADS AND ASSESSING THE PROFUNDITY OF POLITICAL CONVICTIONS." HE WILL TAKE NOTE OF THE TONE AND CONTENT OF THE "PEACE DEBATE" IN ISRAEL OVER THE NEXT THREE WEEKS. HE WILL BE ASSESSING - IN HIS ANALYSIS OF THAT DEBATE AND HIS KEEN UNDERSTANDING OF BOTH THE KEY

PERSONALITIES AND THE ISRAELI POLITICAL LANDSCAPE - THE LIKELY DOMESTIC POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF POSSIBLE CAMP DAVID OUTCOMES.

3. WHAT FOLLOWS IS A PRELIMINARY STRUCTURE IN WHICH THE PRE-CAMP DAVID DEBATE CAN BE SET AS IT UNFOLDS, A SKELETON WHICH WILL BE FLESHED OUT AS GOVERNMENT,

OPPOSITION, PRESS AND PUBLIC OPINION TRENDS COME INTO FOCUS.

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- 4. THE ISRAELI LEFT, COMPRISED PRIMARILY OF RAKAH, SHELLI AND MAPAM, IS NOT EFFECTIVE: IT DOES NOT OCCUPY A PLACE IN BEGIN'S FIELD OF VISION. THIS IS TRUE THUS FAR OF THE PEACE NOW MOVEMENT, AS WELL.
- 5. THE LABOR OPPOSITION. BEGIN TAKES LABOR'S FOREIGN POLICY CRITUQUE SERIOUSLY, AND REACTS TO STATEMENTS AND

CHALLENGES BY THE LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP. LABOR'S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO THE CAMP DAVID ANNOUNCEMENT WAS TO EXPOUND ON THE VIRTUES OF TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE AND TO CONFIDENTIAL.

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DENOUNCE BEGIN'S AUTONOMY PLAN AS CONCEPTUALLY FLAWED BECAUSE IT WOULD INEVITABLY RESULT IN A PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK. THIS STRATEGY HAS DONE LITTLE FOR LABOR IN THE PAST AND IS UNLIKELY TO PAY OFF IN THE NEXT THREE WEEKS. LABOR WOULD MAXIMIZE ITS EFFECTIVENESS BY PUTTING ITSELF IN A POSITION TO REAP POLITICAL REWARDS FROM A FAILURE BY BEGIN AT CAMP DAVID, THEREBY FORCING BEGIN TO STRETCH HIS LIMITS IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THE CHANCES OF THE MEETING'S SUCCESS. PERES COULD DO THIS BY ARGUING THE CASE FOR TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE IN TERMS OF ITS GREATER ACCEPTABILITY TO SADAT, WHILE REJECTING BEGIN'S PLAN ON THE GROUNDS OF ITS BLATANT UNACCEPTABILITY (WHICH, SINCE EGYPT'S REJECTION OF TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE AFTER LEEDS. WOULD ADMITTEDLY BE DIFFICULT TO CARRY OFF). INSTEAD, LABOR HAS PREFERRED TO CONCENTRATE ON THE CONCEPT-UAL SUPERIORITY OF TERRIOTRIAL COMPROMISE AS A SAFEGUARED OF ISRAEL'S LONG-TERM SECURITY INTERESTS. WE HAVE ALREADY HEARD COMPLAINTS FROM LABOR INSIDERS THAT PERES IS PLAYING THE NEW GAME POORLY. INDEED, LABOR MAY SIMPLY NOT BE UP TO THE CHALLENGE. IN ANY EVENT, LABOR'S TIME WILL COME AFTER CAMP DAVID, AND NOT BEFORE.

- 6. OF GREATER POTENTIAL INFLUENCE THAN LABOR ARE THE VARIOUS CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF THE LIKUD COALITION: THE DMC, THE LIBERALS, MUCH OF THE NRP, AND WEIZMAN, ON THE ONE HAND, AND HERUT, PARTICULARLY SHARON AND THE GEULA COHEN GROUP ON THE OTHER. DAYAN OCCUPIES A POSITION OF CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL EFFECTIVENESE AND -AS ALWAYS INDETERMINATE LOCATION.
- 7. THE DMC IS NOW AS ALWAYS ON THE VERGE OF SOMETHING, BUT IT IS NOT CLEAR JUST WHAT. THE RESULTS OF LAST MONTH'S INTERNAL ELECTIONS SHOULD BE CLARIFIED FINALLY CONFIDENTIAL.

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THIS WEEK, AND WE WILL KNOW IF IN FACT THE SHINUI-AMIT DOVES HAVE TAKEN CONTROL AND IF PART OF THE DMC IS HEADED TOWARD AN EARLY WITHDRAWAL FROM THE COALITION. AT THIS MOMENT IT APPEARS THE BEGIN HAS INSURED HIMSELF AGAINST AN IMMINENT DMC DEPARTURE BY SELECTING YADIN FOR INCLUSION WITHIN THE CAMP DAVID NEGOTIATING TEAM.

IT IS LIKELY THAT EVEN THE SHINUI FIREBRANDS WILL AGREE TO AWAIT THE SUMMIT'S OUTCOME BEFORE ELECTING TO JOIN THE OPPOSITION. A FAILED SUMMIT WOULD PROVIDE A RESPECTABLE PRETEXT AND MOMENT TO DO SO: A CAMP DAVID SUCCESS WOULD GIVE SUFFICIENT REASON FOR REASSESSMENT. DESPITE ITS LAUGHING-STOCK IMAGE, THE DMC DOES RETAIN SOME INFLUENCE ON BEGIN. HE IS PROUD OF THE BROAD NUMER-ICAL BASE HIS GOVERNMENT ENJOYS IN THE KNESSET, AND VALUES THE DMC'S LEGITIMIZING ASSOCIATION. HE WILL TAKE NOTE OF ANY INCREASED DMC CALLS FOR FOREIGN POLICY FLEXIBILITY AND THE POSSIBILITY THATH TEZEAR FAILURE AT CAMP DAVID MAY SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HIS KNESSET MAJORITY. YADIN WILL BE UNDER GREATER PARTY PRESSURE TO DELIVER THAN ANY OF HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES, AND HIS VERY PRESENCE AT CAMP DAVID - IF NOTHING ELSE - WILL BE A REMINDER TO BEGIN OF POLITICAL REALITIES AT HOME. BUT IN THE END, BEGIN CAN DO WITHOUT THE HALF-DOZEN DMC MKS WHO MIGHT CHOOSE TO LEAVE AND WOULD STILL RETAIN A KNESSET MAJORITY OF ABOUT 10.

8. THE LIBERALS HAVE BEEN CONTENT, TO THIS POINT, TO REST ON THEIR FADING LAURELS OF FOREIGN POLICY MODERATION. FOR A COALITION MAJORITY TO DEVELOP IN FAVOR OF GREATER FLEXIBILITY THE LIBERALS WOULD HAVE TO TAKE THE LEAD. ANY SIGNAL THAT THEY MIGHT TRY TO DISSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM A FAILURE AT CAMP DAVID - THEY ARE NOT REPRESENTED IN THE NEGOTIATING TEAM - WOULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON BEGIN. THE LIBERALS HAVE NOT ISSUED SUCH A SIGNAL, AND BY ALL ODDS THEY WONT (PARTICULARLY SINCE PARTY LEADER SIMCHA ERLICH WILL BE OUT OF THE COUNTRY TILL THE END OF AUGUST). NONETHELESS, ERLICH HAS STATED CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT IF AND WHEN THE MOMENT OF TRUTH ARRIVES, THE LIBERALS WILL MAKE A STAND FOR MODERATION. WHILE BEGIN IS CONFIDENT THAT THE LIBERALS WILL NOT BE ON TOO SHARP A LOOKOUT FOR THAT MOMENT, HE ALSO KNOWS THAT THERE ARE THOSE, BEGINNING WITH WEIZMAN, WHO JUST MIGHT BE CAPABLE OF FORCING THEM TO RECOGNIZE IT IF IT COMES. BUT THAT WOULD BE ONLY AFTER CAMP DAVID, AND NOT BEFORE.

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9. THE NRP SHARES ONE CHARACTERISTIC WITH THE DMC THESE DAYS: FOGGINESS OF INTENTIONS. FORMER MAXIMALISTS SUCH AS HAMMER AND BEN-MEIR - WHOSE WING IS NOW FULLY IN CONTROL OF THE PARTY - HAVE BEEN MAKING DOVISH NOISES WITH SUFFICIENT REGULARITY SO AS TO CLOUD THE PARTY'S FOREIGN POLICY STAND. THIS MAY BE SIMPLY A MATTER OF INTRA-PARTY MANEUVERING - I.E., THE YOUTH WING SOLIDIFYING ITS CONTROL BY MOVING TOWARD THE PARTY CENTER. IT MAY BE AN EFFORT TO ENHANCE THE PARTY'S LEVERAGE WITHIN THE COALITION, WHICH MAY SIGNAL A TREND OF LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANCE. CONFIDENTIAL

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RIGHT NOW, HOWEVER, THE NRP REMAINS A LOYAL COMPONENT OF BEGIN'S INNER COALITION AND BEGIN WILL NOT BE OVERLY CONCERNED WITH ANY THREAT OF A NRP DEFECTION.

10. WEIZMAN IS THE INDIVIDUAL UNDER BEGIN'S CLOSEST SCRUTINY. HE HAS BEEN BEGIN'S SINGLE GREATEST SOURCE OF POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES OVER THE PAST MONTHS, AND BEGIN WILL BE ACUTELY AWARE OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT A CLEAR FAILURE AT CAMP DAVID COULD PROVIDE WEIZMAN A SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WOULD ENABLE THE KIND OF SERIOUS

CHALLENGE WEIZMAN HAS NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO MOUNT. WEIZMAN HAS COME CLOSE IN THE PAST TO A FINAL BREAK WITH BEGIN. THE EVENTS AT CAMP DAVID COULD TRIGGER THE ULTIMATE CONFRONTATION, WITH WEIZMAN BETTER POSITIONED THAN EVER BEFORE. THIS THREAT WILL BE OF MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS AT THE SUMMIT ITSELF, AND WEIZMAN IS UNLIKELY TO ROCK THE BOAT UNDULY BEFORE IT ANCHORS AT CAMP DAVID.

11. IN THIS CONNECTION, DAYAN'S ROLE IS CRUCIAL. BEGIN IS SURELY NO LESS AWARE THAN HIS KNESSET COLLEAGUES OF DAYAN'S CAPACITY FOR SUDDEN REALIGNMENTS. THE MOST EFFECTIVE CATALYST FOR THE FORMATION OF A UNITED MAJORITY FRONT OF CABINET MODERATES WOULD BE A WEIZMAN-DAYAN LINK-UP. GIVEN THE STRAINED PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO FORMER BROTHERS-IN-LAW AND DAYAN'S CONSTANT REFUSAL IN HIS LONG POLITICAL CAREER TO TRY TO MOBILIZE CABINET MAJORITIES AGAINST HIS PRIME MINISTERS, THE CHANCES OF THIS OCCURRING ARE LOW. MORE LIKELY WILL BE DAYAN'S EFFORT (AND WEIZMAN'S), AT CAMP DAVID, TO WRING THE LAST BIT OF FLEXIBILITY OUT OF BEGIN, IF THERE IS CONCRETE EVIDENCE FROM SADAT THAT MOVEMENT FROM BEGIN WILL BRING REAL RESULTS. BEGIN MUST KNOW THAT IF SADAT SHOWS A CONFIDENTIAL

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WILLINGNESS TO STRIKE A DEAL, DAYAN AND WEIZMAN WILL BE URGING BEGIN TO DO THE NECESSARY.

12. THE PRESSURES FROM THE RIGHT ARE LIMITED TO THE GEULA COHEN WING OF HERUT, LA'AM, AND GUSH EMUNIM AND AGRICULTURAL MINISTER SHARON. THEY ARE POLITICALLY INSIGNIFICANT. BEGIN REALIZES THAT IF HE ADOPTS A MORE FLEXIBBLE POSITION AT CAMP DAVID HE WILL NOT NEED THEIR SUPPORT, AS THE MAJORITY IN THE CABINET AND KNESSET WILL STAND BY HIM. DESPITE THEIR POLITICAL WEAKNESS, HOWEVER, THE HARDLINERS (PARTICULARLY HIS OLD COMRADES IN HERUT) RETAIN A STRONG PSYCHOLOGICAL LINK WITH BEGIN. IT WOULD BE EMOTIONALLY DIFFICULT FOR BEGIN TO DO ANYHING WHICH WOULD SEVER THAT TIE.

13. ALL SAID, BEGIN CONTINUES TO BE FAR LESS CONSTRAINED BY DOMESTIC POLITICAL FACTORS THAN HE IS BY HIW OWN DEFINITION OF THE IDEOLOGICALLY ACCEPTABLE. HIS VIEW OF WHAT HE CAN AND CANNOT AGREE TO AT CAMP DAVID WILL BE DETERMINED MOST IMPORTANTLY BY HIS VERY PERSONAL IDEOLOGICAL-HISTORICAL VISION OF ISRAEL'S MINIMAL REQUIREMENTS. HE IS CONFIDENT IN HIS ABILITY TO RALLY THE ISRAELI PUBLIC IN SUPPORT OF THAT VISION, COME WHAT MAY. LEWIS

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